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MACROECONOMIC POLICY QUESTIONS: TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 1 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Declaration adopted by the Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, held at United Nations Headquarters on 30 September 1996.

On behalf of the least developed countries, I would like to request you to arrange to have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 94 (c).

(Signed) Anwarul Karim CHOWDHURY
Permanent Representative
and
Coordinator of the Least
Developed Countries in
New York

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Annex

DECLARATION OF THE MINISTERIAL MEETING OF
THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

NEW YORK, 30 SEPTEMBER 1996

We, the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries meeting in New York during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly pursuant to the decision of the Dhaka Declaration of February 1990,

Recalling the Paris Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s,

Recalling the Ministerial Declaration adopted at Midrand, South Africa, on 1 May 1996 during the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

Noting the outcome of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Paris Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, held in New York in September/October 1995,

Having assessed progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action,

Solemnly declare the following:

1. We are deeply concerned that only limited progress has so far been made in the implementation of the Paris Programme of Action. Despite vigorous domestic efforts to implement economic reforms, the least developed countries as a group have not been provided with adequate support to enable them to meet the objectives of the Programme. While their overall economic performance showed some modest improvement during the last two years, a decisive reversal of their socio-economic deterioration is not yet in sight. The problems associated with formidable structural adjustment difficulties and economic reforms, declining flow of already low level of development resources, extremely low export capacity, compounded by limited market access, crushing debt burden, low level of human development, environmental degradation etc., continue to impede seriously the development efforts of the least developed countries. Periodic natural and man-made disasters and other adverse situations, including political instability and civil strife and problems of refugees and their attendant negative consequences, continue to imperil the fragile socio-economic conditions in many least developed countries. Their development problematique is further compounded by the process of rapid globalization in a liberalizing world economy, which has magnified the susceptibility of the least developed countries to powerful external forces and deepened their marginalization.

2. The asymmetry in the implementation of the Programme of Action has grown further in that, while the least developed countries have been expanding the deepening reform efforts in line with the Programme, implementation of the commitments by the development partners has increasingly faltered. The decline in the official development assistance flows to the least developed countries is

an important testimony to this disturbing trend. Between 1994 and 1995, total official development assistance provided by the Development Assistance Committee donor countries fell by nearly one tenth. The share of least developed countries in these shrinking official development assistance flows has declined to levels far short of the targets and commitments agreed upon in the Paris Programme of Action. Official development assistance flows to least developed countries, as a share of the Development Assistance Committee donors' combined gross national products, fell from 0.09 per cent in 1990 to 0.07 per cent in 1994, and this trend continued during 1995. Dwindling official development assistance flows have seriously undermined the development efforts of the least developed countries and their capacity to attract other forms of development financing, including private flows. We urge our development partners to make special efforts to reverse the decline in development resource flows to least developed countries and make an effort to reach the target agreed in the Paris Declaration and Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. In this regard, we note the emphasis given by the heads of States and Governments of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries in Lyons to development resource requirements of the poorest countries. We urge our development partners to undertake practical measures to translate this into concrete and early actions with a view to providing the least developed countries with a substantially increased volume of official development assistance as envisaged in the Programme of Action. The mid-term global review of the Programme of Action set out specific measures to incorporate aid targets and commitments in favour of the least developed countries into the donors' national aid strategies and budgetary planning mechanisms. These measures should be to put into operation urgently.

3. We are encouraged that agreements have been reached on the funding arrangements for the eleventh replenishment of the International Development Agency and on replenishing the African Development Fund. In view of the fact that the multilateral financial institutions and organizations provide a significant part of the external financing of the least developed countries, we urge that these pledges be implemented in a timely manner. Adequate resources should also be provided while replenishing the Asian Development Fund, as well as for the United Nations funds and programmes.

4. The external debt-service burden of the least developed countries remains extremely high and in many cases unsustainable. This has seriously jeopardized their economic growth and development. The least developed countries welcome various debt-relief measures currently in place, but these measures have remained grossly inadequate to reduce decisively their heavy debt burden. We note with keen interest the recent multilateral debt relief initiative by the Bretton Woods institutions. We note with keen interest the recent initiative by the Bretton Woods institutions on alleviating the external debt of the poorest countries, including multilateral debt. An assessment of this initiative will have to await the finalization of the debt relief schemes. It should, however, be mentioned that the effectiveness of this scheme will critically depend on the nature of eligibility criteria and the flexibility with which they are applied, the country coverage, and the extent of relief provided. In particular, all debt-distressed least developed countries should be brought under this scheme and the debt reduction should be large enough to bring the debt stock and debt servicing of these countries to a sustainable level. Such relief should be

provided on an urgent basis so as to enable these countries to resume their process of growth and development. We also appeal to all creditor countries to cancel fully all bilateral official debt owed by the least developed countries.

5. The continued marginalization of the least developed countries in world trade is a source of great concern. We note with disquiet that the least developed countries as a whole may be adversely affected by the agreements of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. The least developed countries notably stand to suffer erosion of preferential margins they hitherto enjoyed for most of their main exports to international markets, resulting in a loss in their export market shares and export earnings. The net food-importing least developed countries would face higher food import bills, owing to trade liberalization in the agricultural sector. Many land-locked least developed countries face additional constraints due to their being land-locked and thus require special measures by the international community. We urge our development and trading partners to adopt specific and concrete measures to redress these problems. Such measures should help the least developed countries to meet their obligations under the said agreements; to secure financial, technical and technological support, as agreed in the relevant agreements; and to secure compensation for losses they have suffered during implementation of the said agreements. Such measures should also result in reversal of the marginalization of the least developed countries, ensure their integration into the global economy and strengthen their capacity to compete effectively in world trade.

6. We call upon our development and trading partners to provide assistance to the least developed countries on a priority basis, to mitigate the adverse consequences arising from the Final Act of the Uruguay Round and to enable the least developed countries to exploit opportunities that may emanate therefrom. In particular, the proposal to accord duty-free treatment to exports of the least developed countries should be given urgent consideration. There has not yet been any visible action in implementing the special and differential measures accorded to the least developed countries in the various agreements of the Round.

7. We also reiterate the importance of setting up "safety net" measures to help the least developed countries tide over the transitional difficulties, which could take the form of technical assistance, food aid, debt relief, additional preferential measures - including those in areas where trade liberalization is at an incipient stage - exempting the least developed countries from "tariff peaks" and "tariff escalation", and trade promotion measures. We call upon the Singapore Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization, to be held in December 1996, to adopt a comprehensive plan of action for the least developed countries which should contain concrete measures in the area of market access and as in other areas, including immediate elimination of all tariff and non-tariff measures on all existing and future export items originating from the least developed countries, with a view to enhancing their export earnings and improving their supply capacity of tradeable goods and services and enabling them to benefit from the Final Act of the Uruguay Round.

8. The least developed countries confront the processes of globalization and liberalization with distinct disadvantages. The outcome of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development highlights the challenges posed to the least developed countries and the need to provide support to these countries to help them overcome the risks of further marginalization in the process. Enhanced access to expanding global markets requires efficient production structures capable of meeting increasingly exacting demands in terms of quality, cost and delivery structures on international markets. These requirements contrast sharply with the salient characteristics of the export sector of the least developed countries, which include serious lack of diversification and widespread shortages of entrepreneurial and managerial skills, technological capacities, physical infrastructure and support services such as finance, marketing and insurance. Integration of the least developed countries into the world economy, to resolve these formidable constraints, will require concerted action by the least developed countries, the international community and multilateral institutions, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions.

9. We reiterate the conclusion of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the provision in paragraph 114 calling for the implementation of the mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. In particular, we urge for the strengthening of the entity in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development secretariat dealing with issues of the least developed countries, to enable it effectively to coordinate the sectoral work and monitor the implementation of the Paris Programme of Action, the special provisions for least developed countries contained in the Uruguay Round agreements and decisions of the major global conferences relevant to the least developed countries. Emerging out of its ninth session, the revitalized United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will have a major role to play in realizing potential gains from globalization and liberalization and reduce the risks of marginalization. In this regard, we welcome the Special Initiative for Least Developed Countries launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and also the steps taken by him in establishing a trust fund for the least developed countries. We also welcome his decision to hold monthly consultations with heads of the missions of the least developed countries in Geneva on the functioning of new organizational arrangements and on issues of interest to the least developed countries. We request him to put the trust fund into operation as soon as possible and urge the donors to contribute generously to the fund and to support all other activities undertaken for the least developed countries. We express our readiness to extend to him our full cooperation and support in successfully implementing this important undertaking. We also would like to request him to commence the preparatory process, at the level of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development secretariat, for a third United Nations conference on the least developed countries.

10. We note with interest the substantive communication between the Heads of Government of Bangladesh, on behalf of the least developed countries, and the President of France, the host of the Group of Seven summit held in Lyons, France, in June 1996, pursuant to the Midrand Ministerial Declaration of Least

Developed Countries. We are convinced of the need for a standing arrangement for continued dialogue between the least developed countries and the seven major industrialized countries. Towards this end, we would like to request the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to continue to bring to the attention of the future summit meetings of the Group of Seven countries issues of particular concern to the least developed countries.

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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 16 October 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit herewith the Harare Declaration on Solar Energy and Sustainable Development and the World Solar Programme 1996-2005: An Outline, which were adopted by heads of State and Government on the occasion of the World Solar Summit held at Harare on 16 and 17 September 1996.

I wish to request that this letter and its two annexes be circulated as documents of the General Assembly under the above agenda item.

(Signed) Machivenyika Tobias MAPURANGA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex I

HARARE DECLARATION ON SOLAR ENERGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We, the heads of State and Government, gathered or officially represented in Harare on the occasion of the World Solar Summit, following the invitation by the Government of Zimbabwe and at the initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in collaboration with international organizations and institutions, in order to launch a programme for global solar activities to be known as the World Solar Programme 1996-2005:

1. Recognize the significance of the role that solar and other sources of renewable energy, such as wind, geothermal, hydro, biomass and ocean energy, as well as energy efficiency, should play in the provision of energy services and in the sustainable use of environmental resources for the well-being of humanity;

2. Reiterate our support for the principles and actions for the promotion of energy systems for sustainable development recommended by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held from 3 to 14 June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, in particular the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and Agenda 21, as well as the commitments made in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;

3. Recognize that the provision of sufficient energy services at affordable prices and the adoption of energy conservation measures are essential for the progress of all countries, developed and developing alike, to meet current and expanding needs in ways that minimize environmental degradation and risks, as well as to realize the full potential of renewable energy sources;

4. Recognize that there is a need to increase substantially access to energy in developing countries, and that the provision of adequate energy services can improve living conditions, alleviate poverty, improve health and education, promote small-scale enterprises and create other income-generating activities, especially in rural and isolated areas, thereby reducing rural to urban migration;

5. Recognize that the role of solar energy in each country needs to be integrated and specified in its national energy policy;

6. Recognize that the development, deployment and widespread utilization of solar energy face difficulties, particularly with regard to their management, maintenance and financing as well as to the availability and accessibility of relevant data, information, education, training and technology;

7. Recognize that increased use of solar energy can reduce environmental degradation caused by adverse human activities, such as industrial pollution and deforestation, and that it is the responsibility of Governments and all sectors of civil society to work together to find lasting solutions to problems threatening the sustainable development of humanity;

8. Emphasize that the management of atmospheric emissions of greenhouse and other gases and substances will increasingly require efficient and environmentally sound energy systems, including solar energy systems;

9. Recognize the important role that relevant non-governmental organizations play in the development and deployment of solar energy;

10. Recognize that women have an important role to play in the promotion of solar energy, and that they would benefit significantly from its use;

11. Are convinced that sustainable development and the utilization of solar energy would be enhanced by local and national capacity-building, policy reform and technology-sharing among nations, with an emphasis on coherent efforts towards technology acquisition and development in the developing countries.

We therefore:

12. Commit ourselves to working towards the wider use of solar energy to enhance the economic and social development of all people. The support and promotion of these efforts should be very important goals of our Governments, the international community and all sectors of society, especially with respect to people living in isolated and underdeveloped rural and island communities;

13. Commit ourselves to working towards policies and effective mechanisms that will speed up and facilitate the use of solar energy, avoiding duplication and administrative delays, and the encouragement of international cooperation, including participation in regional and international bodies, scientific and technical organizations;

14. Commit ourselves to working towards the greater use of solar energy through the provision of adequate technical assistance and funding, the full utilization of existing international funds, and the facilitation of increased participation by both public and private sectors.

In pursuit of these objectives, we:

15. Call on all nations to join in the development and implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005;

16. Invite the World Solar Commission to continue to provide high-level political leadership and guidance to achieve the objectives of the Summit and invite the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to continue to play a leading role in the development of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, in close cooperation with relevant international organizations;

17. Invite the Secretary-General and head of specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations, as well as national Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, academic and research institutions and the private sector, to join in the implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.

Annex II

WORLD SOLAR PROGRAMME 1996-2005: AN OUTLINE

1. Introduction

This outline of the proposed World Solar Programme 1996-2005, to be launched at the World Solar Summit on 16 and 17 September 1996 in Harare, is an attempt to briefly state the most salient features of the Programme and its determining activity, the World Solar Summit Process.

The World Solar Programme is an open-ended attempt through broad partnership and cooperation of Governments and organizations to promote the adoption and wider utilization of renewable energy sources. This will be achieved through the setting of agreed targets, appropriate standards, cooperation mechanisms, incentives and pooling of resources. The major benefits to be derived from the Programme include the enhancement of the quality of life of large numbers of people, particularly in the rural areas, and the creation of additional employment through the development of new enterprises. The Programme is a response to the challenge posed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which requires all countries to institute appropriate measures for reducing pollution by introducing clean technology; hence, the Programme will set us off on the "solar highway" leading to sustainable development.

The World Solar Programme will evolve over the decade 1996-2005 through the development and implementation of high-priority national, regional and global projects, under the leadership and guidance of the World Solar Commission.

2. Background

Rapid political, social and economic changes are taking place everywhere, bringing both hope and despair to individuals in different parts of the world. As far as energy is concerned, the world today seems to have been polarized. The 75 per cent of humanity living in the developing countries account for only 25 per cent of global energy consumption. More than one billion people in the developing countries have no source of energy available to them other than the traditional ones (fuelwood and other forms of biomass). More than two billion people in these countries have no access to electricity. It was in its endeavour to take up the challenge of providing these people with their basic minimum energy needs that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in a broad-based partnership with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, international organizations and concerned governmental and non-governmental organizations, launched in 1993 a global initiative: a three-year-long communication process known as the World Solar Summit Process. The objectives of the Process were to enhance the global understanding of the role that renewable energies can play in providing clean energies to billions of people in far and remote areas of the developing countries of the world; create new employment opportunities; improve health services; contribute to the preservation of the environment; and develop and

reinforce the spirit of international cooperation through interregional communication and exchange of expertise and technologies. The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 is envisaged as an instrument for attaining the objectives of the World Solar Summit Process.

3. The Programme and its nature

The World Solar Programme finds it roots in the high-level regional consultations that have been undertaken throughout the world during the last three years. The Programme is conceived as a necessary global commitment and a major coordinated effort of the various national and international actors to develop and implement more than 300 top-priority renewable energy projects of national, regional and international value within a 10-year period in order to demonstrate the technical feasibility, economic viability and social and political acceptability of solar energy. This Programme should be seen as a challenging joint effort involving Governments, major international organizations and funding institutions, non-governmental organizations, industries, scientific and research institutions, universities etc. to promote the development and deployment of renewable energy.

4. The aims and objectives of the Programme

The aims and objectives of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005 are to:

- Enhance the understanding of the role that renewable energy sources can play in the preservation of the environment; the provision of energy services, particularly for rural and remote areas; the creation of employment and improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the rural people, particularly of women in the developing countries of the world; and the fostering of increased energy independence;

- Develop a favourable political, social and economic climate in favour of renewable energies by demonstrating the economic viability and social acceptability of such projects;

- Promote and harmonize cooperation in education, training and research, as well as in the transfer of research disclosures to industry at the regional, interregional and international levels;

- Strengthen the commitment from the international community, especially multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as the national commitment from each country;

- Reinforce local technological and entrepreneurial capacity-building and encourage the creation of small-scale financing and delivery mechanisms.

5. Scope of the Programme

The Programme includes projects of varying degrees of geographical limits and accruing values. Some projects have been identified by various national Governments themselves as being of the highest priority. Such projects, known as the high-priority national projects, will not only be of benefit to the concerned countries but will also provide valuable information to other countries.

Other projects of regional value have been identified during the various regional consultations that took place in different parts of the world during the last three years. These projects have been termed high-priority regional projects, the benefits of which will accrue to the entire region.

Finally, there are global projects of universal value, identified and endorsed during regional ministerial-level and high-level expert meetings, as well as during the meetings of the regional solar councils, organized since 1993 within the framework of the World Solar Summit Process. A short summary of each of these projects is presented hereunder:

- Rural electrification: in the rural and/or remote areas of the world, more than 400 million households do not have access to electricity;

- Global education and training programme: its objective is to effectively disseminate information and provide appropriate training for engineers, technicians and users of solar energy technology, as well as decision makers, businessmen and industrialists;

- Water desalination and purification: the objective of this project is to initiate the implementation of a world water desalination programme designed to establish new ways of supplying drinkable water to rural areas, using renewable energies;

- Information and communication: the objectives are to provide the necessary information to both the decision maker and the public at large in order to sensitize them on the potential of renewable energies, and to provide professional know-how and expertise-sharing in the area of renewable energy technologies and systems;

- Industrial policy, market penetration and technology transfer: the aims are to establish regulations for the integration of renewable energies in common planning procedures and project development; to establish new information channels to disseminate the appropriate technologies to target groups of professionals and marketers; to set up mechanisms to facilitate North-South and South-South technology-sharing initiatives at the regional and local levels; and to support the market with strong research and development efforts to investigate innovative concepts and stimulate the take-up of new technologies in the market based on the feedback from the market's end-users.

6. Strategy to achieve the Programme's objectives

The World Solar Programme envisages the accomplishment of its objectives by mobilizing a concerted global effort, with the continued cooperation and commitment of various Governments, international organizations, bilateral and multilateral funding institutions, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, research organizations and universities, etc. Since the Programme aims to implement the high-priority projects of national and regional importance submitted by various Governments, it attaches a strategic importance to continued intergovernmental and intra-governmental support and to the mobilization of the private sector.

7. Funding for the Programme

Various regional consultations on this issue have revealed that in some countries today, budgetary provision already exists for research, education, training and development in the area of renewable energies. However, it has become increasingly evident that the funding windows for the development of renewable energies from government and private sources as well as financial and developmental institutions should be augmented. Furthermore, innovative new financing opportunities, including microfinancing and the need to attract private capital to supplement insufficient public resources, should be created. It is expected that national Governments, as well as international and regional development and finance banks, will accord high priority to financing renewable energy projects identified in the Programme.

8. Methodology for the implementation of the Programme

The detailed methodology for the implementation of the Programme will be finalized after it is formally launched at the World Solar Summit. Under the overall guidance of the World Solar Commission, the Programme will be given a definite structure within a period of nine months after the Summit through intensive deliberations and appropriate negotiations, it being understood that the Programme is open-ended, i.e., that new projects can be included during the decade that it will cover.

The World Solar Programme 1996-2005 will be implemented having recourse as much as possible to partnership arrangements and using existing structures extensively. At the international level, the various organizations and institutions concerned should be responsible for the execution of projects within their respective spheres of competence. The same will be true at the regional level, where the regional solar councils created at the regional preparatory meetings for the World Solar Summit Process should play a coordinating and monitoring role.

While UNESCO is prepared to continue to furnish the secretariat of the World Solar Commission, a substantial increase in the participation of all main actors at the international intergovernmental level will be necessary to ensure the successful completion and implementation of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005.